



Love U2: PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Love U2: Getting Smarter About Relationships, Sex, Babies, and Marriage is a new kind of curriculum for teens. It looks beyond the “dos and don’ts” of sex to the context of sexuality: namely, relationships. Its goal is to help young people acquire practical skills and useful knowledge for forming emotionally healthy, mutually respectful and ethically sound relationships. But Love U2 is about more than skills or facts. It focuses on helping teens craft a North Star—a vision of healthy relationships—that will guide their own behavior. Teens today live and breathe in a culture emphasizing casual sex and casual connections where no relationship can be trusted to last and where even the most important family bonds can’t be counted on. Indeed for some teens, sex is seen simply as a transaction. Teens are short on positive models. They have few roadmaps that will lead them into healthy relationships and away from destructive ones. Love U2 aims at giving teens a positive, aspirational model for committed and healthy love relationships. This curriculum is about what teens can hope to achieve, not just what they must try to avoid.

Why This Curriculum Is Needed

This nation has been locked in an ideological battle over sex education: Should we teach abstinence until marriage or should we teach about safer sex, condoms, and many points in between? This discussion has divided us and shortchanged our teens. Love U2 breaks through this gridlock. It is unapologetically pro-abstinence but not for reasons that have to do with religion, ideology or politics. It is pro-abstinence because it is concerned about the emotional and social well-being of teens. Consider this thought experiment posed by Isabel Sawhill, president of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Let’s say we could somehow eliminate all of the health consequences of teen sex—STDs and pregnancy. Given that scenario, would you want a 15 or 16 year old sexually active? Many people would answer no, and the reason is that there are other compelling emotional and social reasons for teens to abstain from sex. Sex is not just like eating pizza or driving to the movies. It’s not just about health and safety. We want more from it. Consider the rather consistent finding that the overwhelming majority of sexually active teens wish they’d waited. There are powerful emotional reasons to wait to have sex that have lots to do with the fact that early sexual involvement is not likely to deliver what teens, especially girls, want—namely, affection, connection, respect, or love. Then there are social reasons that have to do with the benefits and freedoms of abstinence for healthy relationship development. For teens, adding sex typically blurs or hinders genuine relationship development, or worse, glues teens (especially girls) to bad relationships. Importantly, there are ethical reasons for thinking about the context for sex that have to do with considering the needs of a child for two parents committed for the long haul to each other and the child. Sex can always create a child—a simple fact that’s often forgotten.

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Teens are on a journey to learn about love, relationships, themselves, and their emerging sexuality. They are moving out of their families and building friendships and romantic connections. As they jump into relationships, teens are in the throes of powerful feelings of attraction, rejection, and a myriad other emotions. Most teens want affection, respect, love, and connection. Yet, our young people get little guidance on navigating that world of teen relationships and the sexual culture. While we tell them what to say “no” to, we do too little to help teens build the healthy relationships to which they can say “yes.”

Sadly, the messages teens receive about sex, and the messages they don’t receive about developing positive relationships and why marriage matters if they plan to have children, set the stage for many to be snagged or derailed as young adults. Contemporary culture’s encouragement for sex without meaning, living together without commitment, and babies without marriage carry consequences that seriously disadvantage our young people, especially females. Troubled or unstable relationships and unplanned pregnancies can derail young adults in serious ways or cancel out their gains in education and, later, employment and parenting.

Building Assets

This curriculum is meant to contribute to the larger project of building assets for youth. Insights and skills for building successful relationships now and in their future are important assets for young people. It is part and parcel of the trajectory of student and life success, and is firmly rooted in a positive youth development approach. Love U2 is meant to help young people craft a “North Star” for their relationship lives as well as build critical communication and other relationship skills and insights on relationship development. It engages teens in a deeper exploration of the emotional and social dimensions of sexuality and strongly encourages teens to postpone sexual involvement with positive reasons and skills. Love U2 is also meant to inform young people of the findings of social science research on the link between child well-being and family structure. Although teens and young adults alike say they highly value life-long marriage as a personal goal, many are likely to fail, or afraid to try. Teens and young adults are woefully ignorant or misinformed about the basic research evidence on the importance of quality relationships and marriage. They know little about the economic, social, and personal benefits of marriage and what research has discovered about the patterns that erode vs. protect relationships and marriage. Young people have many misconceptions about cohabitation, the responsibilities of parenthood, and what it takes to raise children successfully.

Beyond the Health Paradigm

Our curricula and most importantly our conversations with teens should not just be about avoiding STDs or pregnancy—we need to move out of the confines of a health paradigm. Sex has meaning—or, rather, sex should have meaning, even if there is no health risk. Our conversations need to turn more attention to building healthy relationships, about affirming the power and potential of sexual love in the right context, about the consequences for babies when they are unplanned and about unwed pregnancies. We should and can reach for higher ground in our discussions with teens. And, teens want us to do just that. The 2003 teen survey conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is particularly revealing: two-thirds of teens say their own morals, values, and or religious beliefs—as well as concerns about their future—influence their decisions about sex far more than concerns about pregnancy or STDs. Perhaps one reason why teens are so bored with our conventional approaches is that they sense we have nothing of soulful substance to say beyond body parts and clinical risk reduction. We have little to say that truly inspires and helps teens reach for a “North Star” in their relationships and for thinking about them selves and their responsibilities in relationship to others—whether it be in a romantic relationship, their family, to a child that results from a sexual encounter, or in a future marriage. There are other instructive reminders of what we need to address from the Campaign’s surveys. 92% of teens believe that it’s important for teens to be given a strong message from

society that they shouldn’t have sex until they are at least out of high school. 84% of teens believe that teen pregnancy prevention should teach young people to be married before they have a child.

You will find some pages about health information inside Love U2, but more attention is given to themes exploring relationship development, the meaning of sexual love, and the disconnect between childbearing and marriage and its consequences for children. Love U2 does contain explicit information on STDs, pregnancy, contraceptives and condoms, but it is presented in the context of values and relationships. Importantly, this curriculum sketches out a larger context for thinking about these things. It’s not just about “me”. There’s a bigger picture here. It’s about relationships, values, deeper meanings; it’s also about the needs of children, it’s about family and it’s about community.

Love U2: Relationship Smarts Evaluation Results



Looking Towards a Healthy Marriage: School-based Relationships Education Targeting Youth

Overview

Building knowledge and skills among adolescents about healthy relationships is suggested as a means for prevention of unhealthy dating relationships and future unhealthy relationships, marital instability, and risky home environments for children. In 2004, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Healthy Couples, Healthy Children Project (funded by the Alabama Child Abuse and Neglect Board) expanded marriage education programming into Alabama High Schools, using the Relationship Smarts curriculum (Pearson, 2004). To date a total of 218 adolescents have participated in the program and returned evaluation questionnaires. Another 125 adolescents completed questionnaires as control subjects. Participants were very receptive to the program content and demonstrated significant improvements in all measures of knowledge related to the program goals. These include greater awareness of healthy and unhealthy dating relationships, healthy relationship development and healthy marriages. Data collection is not yet complete for the participants and control group, however, indications are that participants are improving in desired ways and that participation may explain these changes.

Rationale

Couple conflict and intimate partner violence are not only experienced in the confines of adult committed relationships. Violence also occurs between dating partners, including adolescent dating partners. In Alabama, youth experience higher prevalence rates of victimization than the national average. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2001) 12.9% of females and 7.6% of males were physically forced to have sexual intercourse compared to 10.3% of females and 5.1% of males, nationally; 13.2% of females and 14.1% of males were victims of dating physical violence, compared to 9.8% of females and 9.0% of males, nationally. It is apparent that victimization can occur not only between intimate partners but also when couples have just started dating. Violence can occur during adolescence, and both males and females can be either victims or perpetrators of violence toward their partner. Thus, since adolescents are still children, it appears that dating violence is another form of maltreatment against children requiring preventive efforts, yet is seldom addressed.

Although there is risk of dating violence, it is important to recognize that dating is a normal part of life, can be quite positive, and has developmental purposes (e.g., mate selection) (Paul & White, 1990). In addition, studies have shown that adolescent dating builds self-competence and self-worth, provides opportunities to practice conflict management and negotiate trust, and opportunities to learn how to protect oneself from abusive relationships, and how to form and maintain healthy relationships (Collins, 2003). It is through dating that adolescents are learning how to become a healthy socially competent dating partner, which translates into becoming a healthy socially competent marriage partner as an adult. Over 90% of adolescents will marry during their lifetime and about half will divorce. Teaching relationships skills and information about healthy marriages is probably the most relevant course adolescents can take.

Program overview

Using the Relationship Smarts curriculum (Pearson, 2004), Alabama family and consumer science (FCS) teachers in several counties are facilitating classes on skills and knowledge necessary for healthy dating relationships, for making good choices about partners, and for later healthy couple and marital relationships. For the participants, our program goals are the reduction of the risk of maltreatment in dating relationships, an increase of knowledge of the characteristics of healthy relationships, and the promotion of future healthy relationships and marriages of these youth as they transition into adulthood and parenthood.

Through funding by the Alabama Child Abuse and Neglect Board, faculty from Auburn University trained ten FCS teachers in the curriculum. In return for their materials and training the teachers were to offer the curriculum in their respective schools and return evaluation questionnaires from both

participants and control subjects. To date eight of the ten have either started or completed their class offering. Presently, a total of 218 adolescents have completed the program. Participants are enrolled in the 9th – 12th grades in various Alabama High Schools. The average age of the participants was 16. The participant group was 74% female; 26% male; 51% were African American; 45% White; 4% other ethnicity. Nearly equal numbers lived in single parent families; stepfamilies, and nuclear families (32%, 25%; 33% respectively). One half of the participants reported that they had experienced their parents' divorce. 63% of the participant students reported currently dating someone, with the median length of 6 months of dating that person. 125 control subjects were recruited by the teachers from their other class periods and did not participate in the curriculum, but did complete evaluation questionnaires at the same time points as the participants. The two groups did not differ significantly by gender or race and only slightly by age.

Relationship Smarts Curriculum

- Researched-based information and activities designed to enhance adolescents' relationship knowledge and skills
- Assumes that skills can be taught
- Some adaptation
 - Increased interaction and activities
 - Added video on unhealthy, abusive relationships
 - Added "future orientation"
 - specific relationship skills and discussions of future marital relationships and issues related to marriage stability
 - eliminated material for younger audience

From Students

When asked what they most enjoyed about the class:

"Learning what love really means"

"Finding out why we argue and why I act the way I act"

"Getting to know good relationships and bad relationships better than I already did"

"I felt this class will help me deal with some of the relationship problems I will undoubtedly encounter"

"I enjoyed learning about how to avoid being in an abusive relationship"

"It answered many questions I had about my relationships and helped to prepare my relationships for the future"

"It was very informative, I learned things that seemed simple, but they were things I wouldn't know if I didn't take this class. I learned a lot more than I would have just by experience"

Summary and Considerations

The initial pilot of a coordinated effort to implement relationships/marriage education for a diverse population of high schoolers is viewed as successful. Qualitative responses from the teachers and the students themselves suggest that the program content is well-received and judged to be relevant and valuable. Efforts to quantitatively document program impact indicate that students who participate in the Relationship Smarts program show increases in knowledge and understanding of various aspects of healthy relationships on all retrospective pre/post measures related to program objectives. On the comparison of true pre- post-program measures between participants and nonparticipants, questionnaires are still being collected and entered for controls. Once entered, these comparisons should provide additional evidence of program impact. Important lessons learned were gleaned from the initial experience and are being incorporated into the expansion of the project.

June 2005 Stronger Marriages, Stronger Families

Dr. Francesca Adler-Baeder, Auburn University

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More information on Relationship Smarts available at www.dibblefund.org

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Love U2 – List of Lessons

Unit 1. Increasing Your Relationship Smarts

Lesson	Title of Lesson
1	Maturity—It's More Than Physical; Values. What's Important to Me?
2	Crushes 101
3	Crushes 102
4	Attractions and Infatuation
5	Falling in Love
6	First Relationships—Joys and Doubts
7	What's Love?
8	Principles of "Smart" Dating—Don't Be Dumb!
9	Dating and Emotions. Is it Healthy?
10	How to "Really" Know Someone and The Low-Risk Dating Strategy
11	Relationship Decisions and Breaking Up
12	Soul Food. The Power and Potential of True Love and Enduring Commitment
13	Peer Pressure: More Subtle Than You Think

Unit 2. Becoming Sex Smart

Lesson	Title of Lesson
1	Confronting the Paradox: More Sex, Less Joy; Teen Regrets; Who's Really Doing What? Why Teens Become Sexually Active
2	Is Experience Always the Best Teacher? Challenges of Coming of Age; Unmet Needs and Sexual Involvement
3	Understanding the Paradox: Who's Having the Best Sex and Why? Six Parts of Sexuality—It's More Than Physical; Sex-too-Soon and Relationship Development.
4	Male-Female Differences: Understanding Each Other; Gender and Sexual Arousal Patterns; Tips for Guys; Tips for Girls
5	The 17 Steps of Physical Intimacy and Defining Your Boundaries; Increasing Steps & Escalation of Desire; Risks to Heart and Risks to Health; How Far Should We Go? Enjoying the Early Steps
6	Pressure Situations and Decision-Making; Real Situations Brought to Life from My So-Called Life
7	STD Facts and Information That Teens Need to Know
8	Skills and Strategies to Adhere to Your Boundaries; Risky Situations, Pressure Lines, Refusal Skills; Mixed Messages & Faulty Assumptions
9	Changing Course & Designing My Personal Policy; Words and Expectations: Get On the Same Page; Gender Specific Growth Challenges
10	Hearing From Older Teens and Young Adults; Some Who've "Been There, Done That," and Those Who Haven't
11	Culture Pressures: Who's Pulling Your Strings? Advertising and Media.

Unit 3. Communication Smarts: PREP® for TEENS

Lesson	Title of Lesson
1	Destructive Patterns in Relationships—Four Danger Signs
2	Skills to Counter Negative Patterns. Time-Outs: A Path Back to Your Smart Brain; Complaints and Gripes—Being Heard, Not Ignored
3	Filters –"I Did Not Say That!" Personality Style and Creative Use of Differences
4	"I Don't Want To Talk About It" and the Speaker-Listener Technique
5	Issues and Events: What Pushes Your Buttons?
6	Clarifying Expectations—Family, Peers, Girl/Boyfriend
7	Problem Solving and Taking Care of Friendship

Unit 4. Baby Smarts: Through the Eyes of a Child

Lesson	Title of Lesson
1	Pregnancy: How It Happens; Effects of Pregnancy on Her, Him, and the Relationship
2	Teen Pregnancy From the Eyes of a Child; Baby Needs and Teen Needs—In Or Out of Sync? Young Parents Who Go It Alone—Test Your Baby Smarts
3	. What About Fathers? Do They Matter? Good Fathering and Unique Contributions—What Teens Say; The Case of Disappearing Fathers
4	Part I - The First Few Years. Before They're Even Born; Attachment and Emotional Attunement; Insights from Early Brain Research
5	Part II - The First Few Years. Early Socialization and Parenting Practices; Early Experiences and Child Outcomes
6	Decisions About Pregnancy: Ethical and Moral Dilemmas, Adoption Stories, Keeping My Baby—Critical Questions to Ask
7	Marriage: Does It Really Matter? Part I. Marriage Benefits
8	Marriage: Does It Really Matter? Part II. Why Marriage is in Trouble; Is Living Together a Good Idea? Research Findings on Marriage Success and Failure; The Promise of Prevention Education
9	Troubled Parental Relationships/Divorce: How Kids Feel; Teen Advice on Dos and Don'ts for Splitting Parents; Troubled Parental Unions and Child Outcomes
10	Soul Food: The Power of True Love and Enduring Commitment

Trying to teach kids about love, sex, and protecting the heart

MARLINE PEARSON wants to change the way we teach kids about sex.

At a point in the culture wars where the abstinence-only people and the safe-sex people cannot speak to each other, Pearson offers a provocative alternative: Let's talk about protecting the human heart.

Instead of simply urging kids to wait to have sex until they are married, the Wisconsin educator wants to teach kids how to make that marriage work.

And instead of demonstrating how to use a condom and showing grisly pictures of what can happen if you don't, Pearson wants to help kids form a vision of what a meaningful relationship looks like.

To that end, she has developed a curriculum called Love U2: Getting smarter about relationships, sex, babies and marriage.

It is what she uses in her classes at Madison Area Technical College, but she says that can be late in the game to be talking to young people about smart relationships.

It should be part of high school health curriculums and parts of it could be taught in middle school, too, she says.

"I've seen too many times how troubled and unstable relationships can undo the gains young people have made in education, employment, and in their lives," she said at a Washington, D.C., press conference.

"We help with everything -- housing, GEDs, drugs, food, parenting classes, child care, transportation -- only to see it all come apart when they get into a bad relationship."

"We already know the factors and patterns linked to bad relationships," she said. "We don't have to wait for the damage to occur and then mop up."

Pearson said she would take her skills-based approach to relationships into the high schools, and below, because our children aren't born knowing how to sustain a good relationship -- and some children never see one in their own homes or neighborhoods.

Relationship skills are what is missing in sex education, she said.

"We teach young people about sex, but very little about its context -- relationships." Both abstinence-only programs and comprehensive sex education courses fail to provide young people, and especially girls, what Pearson calls a "North Star for their intimate lives."

There is no vision, she says, for good love, meaningful sex, commitment, marriage or the importance of fathers and marriage to children.

She would teach sex in its emotional and social context.

"We need to help teens think through what they want sex to mean, to be aware of the steps of physical involvement and what each step means for their heart, not just their health, then to establish their own boundaries and personal policies on sex."

That is a tall order in today's soulless hook-up culture, where sex is about as special as a phone call. Sex has become something kids just do. It has no romantic meaning, but it still has an emotional price, especially for girls.

And it may have a human price, too, if a pregnancy results. Pearson would also teach what 30 years of social science has learned: marriage matters to children.

Not only do children fare better in households where there are two parents and they are married, but children who are dragged in and out of relationships by a single parent have the worst outcome of any children.

Teens need to learn how to make emotional connections, how to keep good relationships moving forward and how to get out of bad ones because it is clear to Pearson that many of the choices they make as teen-agers are the same choices they will make as adults.

"We can't teach sex as if it stands alone. We have to help these kids put meaning and emotion back into sex," said Pearson.

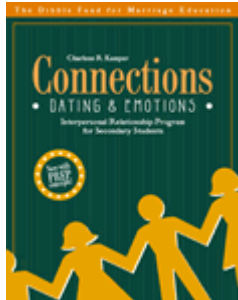
Then we also have to show them how to protect their hearts from that meaning, and that emotion.

"We need to help the next generation do better," Pearson said.

Family Matters

SUSAN REIMER

Connections: Philosophy and Goals

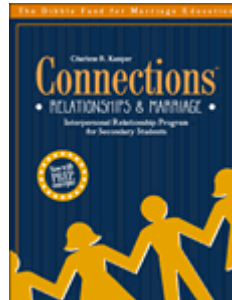


Connections: Dating and Emotions

There is little question that children who have close friendships in elementary school are more socially mature and therefore more likely to sustain healthy dating relationship as teens and adults (Bigelow). Research shows important benefits from dating in high school for teenagers. "It is a way of learning to know, understand and get along with many different types of people. One can learn cooperation, consideration, responsibility, but most of all maturity" (Morrison). High school can be a very trying time for teenagers who are establishing their identity, so having someone special to go out with can make it easier. "People are happier when they are in love; they tend to put more into everything they do – even adolescents" (Dean).

Another study found that "50% of teenagers crave intimacy" (Lampert). Social scientists and psychologists are finding that adolescents are beginning to date at earlier ages. "The average age for a person to begin dating is 13. In 1924 the average age was 16" (Fine). Serious adolescent relationships before either partner is emotionally mature can have detrimental effects for identity formation and even life and health. Adolescents who are dating because of peer pressure or a need to belong can experience significant disappointment. Teen pregnancy, STD's, broken hearts, and depression, are common themes for those who work with teens. It is estimated that 15 percent of teen suicides are due to the breakup of an unhappy relationship. There are various theories and serious concerns over what might be the motivators for young pre-teens as early as 10 and 11 years old to report already having a boyfriend or girlfriend (Rice).

Informed by current research, lesson themes for the *Connections: Dating and Emotions* curriculum were also developed from data gathered from approximately 460 high school junior and senior level students over a two-year period. The students were asked to identify what relationship information they wished someone had talked with them about before reaching their later teens. They were also asked to specify what dating insights they would most likely share with a younger sibling who had not yet begun to date. The areas of relationship most often targeted as important to know



about were then arranged topically and served as the framework for the contents of the curriculum.

Connections: Relationships and Marriage

The *Connections: Relationships and Marriage* curriculum was written for the purpose of teaching junior-senior level

secondary school age adolescents the fundamental components of establishing healthy and stable interpersonal relationships with family, friends, dating partners, and eventually, husbands and wives. Adolescents can learn to recognize important factors in healthy relationships and, hopefully, make thoughtful decisions about their relationships *before* entering into marriage. When one chooses a life partner carefully and enters marriage for the right reasons, everyone benefits: the partners, the children who may enter the family unit, and society as a whole.

The concepts presented in the unit are intended to give participants an opportunity to assess their current level of understanding about relationships, and to give them useful experience in practicing important life management skills. The lessons are designed to assist adolescents in gaining a better understanding of themselves, to help identify positive or negative patterns of behavior that influence the quality of relationships, to clarify perceptions and expectations in dating relationships, and to offer guidelines for making a wise and lasting choice for a marriage partner.

Introducing high school age young adults to the components of healthy dating and marriage relationships takes advantage of an opportune situation. Adolescents are highly motivated to establish interpersonal connections at this stage of their development. Their maturity level has increased enough to allow them to begin thinking critically about the more important issues of their lives. Most teens have had at least moderate dating experience by the time they reach the senior high school level, and some of them are or have been in long-term dating relationships. Adolescents will freely admit, however, that not all of their dating experiences have been positive. Establishing and maintaining a lasting relationship requires knowledge, skill and practice.

The Connections: Relationships and Marriage

curriculum is one method of instruction in this area.

Connections: Relationships and Marriage Evaluation Results

By Scott Gardner, Ph.D.
South Dakota State University
December, 2001

Executive Summary

An evaluation of the Connections: Relationships and Marriage curriculum was conducted with 410 high school students in California. The sample contained an ethnically diverse cross-section of California. Students both in the Connections class as well as a comparative non-Connections class were surveyed both before and after the curriculum was taught. It is important to note that in the results discussed below, while the Connections students improved in the area in question, the non-Connections students either did not improve or in many areas showed significant deterioration.

The results of the evaluation suggest that the Connections curriculum is an effective curriculum in impacting students' knowledge, attitudes and actual behavior a number of areas. Specifically in the area of knowledge, students taking the curriculum improve in their overall knowledge of key relationship concepts and principles in comparison to those who do not take the curriculum.

Attitudes & Behaviors

The Connections Curriculum is effective as a violence prevention curriculum particularly in the area of boyfriend - girlfriend relationships. It is effective in decreasing the actual incidents of violence in close relationships as well as the amount of verbal aggression. It is also effective in improving parent-child communication and decreasing trouble at home.

The curriculum is also effective as a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum. Students taking the curriculum improve over students not taking the curriculum on 3 out of 4 teen pregnancy risk factors assessed in the evaluation.

Students taking the curriculum improved in terms of their ability to resist sexual pressure. Students also improved in the area of feeling that their parents and close friends had positive attitudes toward abstinence. Lastly, students report better overall communication with parents including talking to their parents about relationships.

The Connections curriculum is effective in terms of improving attitudes toward marriage while reducing the likelihood that students see divorce as an ideal solution to problems in marriage. Attitudes also change over the course of the curriculum in terms of the students becoming more willing to attend marriage preparation classes before marriage, marriage enrichment classes during marriage and to attend marriage counseling if their marriage has problems in the future. Additionally, students report that they are less likely to see cohabitation before marriage as a good way to prepare for a future marriage. This viewpoint is consistent with social science research, which suggests that cohabitation before marriage leads to increased risk of divorce, domestic violence and affairs after the marriage.

In summary, the Connections: Relationships and Marriage curriculum is effective as a violence prevention curriculum. It is effective as a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum in terms of its ability to reduce a number of the risk factors of teen pregnancy. Additionally, the curriculum is effective at preventing future relationship and marriage difficulties by improving key attitudes that should lead to students participating in behaviors and activities which are protective against future marital distress, domestic violence and divorce.

Connections: Dating and Emotions Evaluation Results

By Scott Gardner, Ph.D.
South Dakota State University

Executive Summary

The Connections: Dating and Emotions (Connections) curriculum was evaluated in 10 high schools across the United States with over 500 students during the 2003-2004 school year. The sample contained an ethnically diverse cross-section of the country. Students both in the Connections class as well as a comparative Non-Connections class were surveyed both before and after the curriculum was taught. It is important to note that in the results discussed below, while the Connections students improved in the area in question, the Non-Connections students either did not improve or in many areas showed some deterioration.

The results of the evaluation suggest that the Connections curriculum is particularly effective in improving students' ability to resist sexual pressure. Additionally, the curriculum also appears to benefit students behaviorally by decreasing their negative behaviors in school, at home as well as in relationships with other students. Lastly, there are also some positive impacts on student attitudes toward positive relationship formation.

Knowledge

The Connections curriculum does appear to be effective in increasing the knowledge of key healthy relationship concepts.

Behaviors

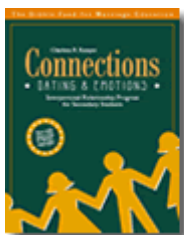
The Connections curriculum is effective as a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum. Students improved significantly in their perceived ability to resist sexual pressure while those students not taking the curriculum remained unchanged. Students are more likely to communicate with their parents after taking the curriculum which further strengthens their likelihood of avoiding risky sexual activity.

Students taking the curriculum also decrease their use of violence with their boyfriend or girlfriend, decrease their use of verbal aggression in the relationship, and decrease how often they get into trouble in school, and at home. Additionally, students report a significantly decreased acceptance of dating violence. These findings suggest that Connections may also be an effective violence prevention curriculum particularly in the area of boyfriend - girlfriend relationships.

Attitudes

The Connections curriculum is effective in terms of improving attitudes. The curriculum has a significant and strong impact on student attitudes toward positive relationship formation. Students taking the Connections curriculum become much more likely to say they will take advantage of marriage preparation classes in the future, marriage enrichment classes after marriage, and marriage counseling if their marriage is in trouble. Students not taking this course remain unchanged in their likelihood of participating in such effective preventative interventions. The Connections students also seemed to remain unchanged in their level of self-esteem while the Non-Connections students significantly decreased in their levels of self-esteem over the same time period.

In summary, the Connections: Dating and Emotions curriculum is effective as a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum. Additionally, the curriculum is effective at preventing future relationship and marriage difficulties by improving key attitudes that should lead to students participating in behaviors and activities which are protective against future marital distress, domestic violence and divorce. The curriculum also shows promise in reducing violence in relationships and negative behaviors at school and at home.



Connections

List of Student Workbook Pages

Connections: Dating and Emotions

Connections: Relationships and Marriage

Section 1	Getting Ready
	What It's About
	Things to Know
	Am I Ready?
	Ask, Accept, or Decline
Section 2	Going Out
	What's the Rush
	How Relationships Grow
	What Should I Say?
Section 3	Difficulties Ahead
	Feeling Alone
	Problem People
	Toxic Talk
	Dating Demons: Anger and Jealousy
	What Abuse Looks Like
Section 4	Defining the Relationship
	It's Not Working
	When It's Over
	Dealing with the Past
	Moving Forward
Section 5	Starting Over
	Feeling Another's Feelings
	Staying Together

Section 1	Personality
	What's It Like to Be Me
	Poster Page
	Understanding Myself Better
	Interview...Up Close
	Your Plan for Life
Section 2	Relationships
	Things Change
	Positive Relationships
	Expectations
	Attractions
	Getting Acquainted
	My Ideal Person
	Dating and Emotions
	Breaking Up
Section 3	Communication
	Family Patterns
	Types of Filters
	Dealing with Conflict
	Let's Talk
	Listening
Section 4	Marriage
	Components of Relationships
	What is Love?
	Roadblocks to Relationships
	Before You Marry
	Making the Decision
	Priorities
	Household Duties
	The Wedding
	Marriage License
	A Portrait
	Family Album
	Finances
	The Family Budget
	Our Crisis
	Family Vacation
	Marriage Evaluation

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